

The background of the entire page is a dark blue, almost black, underwater scene filled with numerous jellyfish. The jellyfish are translucent and have a glowing, ethereal appearance. Some are in sharp focus, showing their internal structures and the delicate, hair-like tentacles at their edges. Others are blurred, creating a sense of depth and movement. The lighting is soft, highlighting the gelatinous texture of the jellyfish.

Migration Navigation

 **beanstack originals**



Migration Navigation

How do animals know where to go when they migrate? Read on to find out!



Millions of animals around the world migrate each year. Have you ever wondered how they know where to go? When people want to figure out how to get to a place, they pull out a map. This could be a paper map, like the kind humans have used for hundreds of years. Or it could be a digital map with directions sent from a satellite, like the kind you find on a smartphone. Animals don't have those tools. So how is it that they don't get lost when they migrate?

Learning Lessons

Think about all the information you absorb from teachers, friends, and family. The people you know teach you lots of things. As it turns out, animals can learn from one another, too. Many animals learn migration routes, or the best ways to migrate, from older animals. Scientists studying arctic sheep and caribou discovered that the young animals often learned how to migrate by following adults in the herd. Other times, the young animals learned just by communicating with the adults. Some young sheep and caribou who were new to an area didn't migrate at all. That's because these young animals didn't have any older animals to show them the way. Once they met more experienced animals, they started migrating, too.

DID YOU KNOW?

Scientists think that before humans invented maps, people traveled using a lot of the same methods that animals use to find their ways.



Migration Navigation



Birds flying over a lake at dusk.

Following Landmarks

As it turns out, some animals do use maps to migrate. Well, sort of! These animals use the land and sky around them to figure out where they are. Some animals find their way by relying on landmarks. These are features of the land that the animals can remember. For example, they might remember specific mountains, rivers, trees, and more. And it's not just on land: some ocean animals, such as dolphins, can follow landmarks along the ocean floor.

Many types of birds can find their way north using certain bright stars, such as the North Star. These stars are not only bright, they also stay in one place in the sky, night after night. This helps the birds tell where they are traveling.

FUN FACT

On the island country of Palau, golden jellyfish migrate across a lake and back every day.

Pulled in the Right Direction

To reach their destinations, some migrators use special abilities—almost like superpowers! Scientists think that, unlike humans, many animals can smell where they are going. For example, experts believe that wildebeests follow the scent of rain to find fresh grasses.



Migration Navigation



Other animals use excellent hearing. Scientists think that elephants might be able to hear rainstorms up to 150 miles away! And it gets even more amazing than that. Other creatures can sense Earth's magnetic field. This is the charged energy that surrounds the planet. These animals may be able to use this energy to figure out where they are and where they are going. How? Scientists aren't sure!